

REMARKS

Reconsideration and allowance of the subject application are respectfully solicited.

Claims 48 through 58 and 60 through 62 are pending, with Claim 48 being independent. Claims 48, 60, and 61 have been amended.

Claims 48 through 54 and 60 through 62 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102 over U.S. Patent No. 6,406,245 B2 (Hasegawa, et al.). Claims 55 through 58 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103 over Hasegawa, et al. in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,319,322 B2 (Ueda, et al.). All rejections are respectfully traversed.

Claim 48 recites, inter alia, the atmosphere in the chamber being purged with an inert gas, in combination with the port section having a load-lock mechanism including a vacuum mechanism for creating a vacuum below atmospheric pressure inside of the port section and a supply mechanism for supplying the inert gas into the inside of the port section so that an atmosphere in the port section is substantially the same as the atmosphere in the chamber.

However, Applicants respectfully submit that neither Hasegawa, et al. nor Ueda, et al., even in combination, assuming, arguendo, that the documents could be combined, discloses or suggests at least the above-discussed combination of claimed features as recited, inter alia, in Claim 48. The Official Action points to, inter alia, to Hasegawa, et al.'s Fig. 7 which shows use of reduced pressure helium (e.g., col. 7, lines 29 and 30), and Applicant respectfully notes that Fig. 9 shows a second chamber 311. However, Applicants respectfully submit that neither the foregoing reduced pressure helium nor the remainder of Hasegawa, et al. and Ueda, et al. provides either a description or suggestion of the above-discussed combination

of claimed features, including purging as claimed. It is further respectfully submitted that there has been no showing of any indication of motivation in the cited documents that would lead one having ordinary skill in the art to arrive at the above-discussed combination of claimed features.

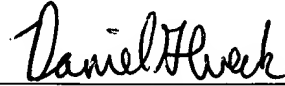
The dependent claims are also submitted to be patentable because they set forth additional aspects of the present invention and are dependent from independent claims discussed above. Therefore, separate and individual consideration of each dependent claim is respectfully requested.

This Amendment After Final Rejection is an earnest attempt to advance prosecution and reduce the number of issues, and is believed to clearly place this application in condition for allowance. Furthermore, Applicants respectfully submit that a full appreciation of these amendments will not require undue time or effort given the Examiner's familiarity with this application. Moreover, this Amendment was not earlier presented because Applicants earnestly believed that the prior Amendment placed the subject application in condition for allowance. Accordingly, entry of this Amendment under 37 C.F.R. § 1.116 is respectfully requested.

Applicants submit that this application is in condition for allowance, and a Notice of Allowance is respectfully requested.

Applicants' undersigned attorney may be reached in our Washington, D.C. office by telephone at (202) 530-1010. All correspondence should be directed to our address listed below.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Daniel S. Glueck". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Attorney for Applicants

Daniel S. Glueck

Registration No. 37,838

FITZPATRICK, CELLA, HARPER & SCINTO
30 Rockefeller Plaza
New York, New York 10112-3800
Facsimile: (212) 218-2200
DSG/cmg

DC_MAIN 197261v1